

**INFLUENCE OF SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS ON SPORT PARTICIPATION  
AMONG FEMALE STUDENTS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN**

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**DECEMBER, 2025**

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**A RESEARCH SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY  
OF BENIN, BENIN CITY, EDO STATE.**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF  
SCIENCE (EDUCATION) (B.Sc.Ed) DEGREE IN HUMAN KINETICS AND SPORT  
SCIENCE**

**DECEMBER, 2025**

## CERTIFICATION

We the undersigned certify that the project was carried out by MAKINDE Ayobami Bukunmi with matriculation number EDU2102459, of the department of Human Kinetics and Sport Science, Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City.

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## **DEDICATION**

This project is dedicated to my parents, Mr. & Mrs. Makinde and to every female who desire to be involved in sport but is not given the opportunity.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

My sincere gratitude goes to the Almighty God for granting me strength and grace to complete this program. The project completion is another milestone in my academic career. I sincerely appreciate the effort and commitment of my project supervisor, Dr. Oriakhi A.U, who is also the Head of the Department of Human Kinetics and Sport Science, for his support and guidance throughout the course of this project.

I appreciate the Academic and Non-Academic Staff for their relentless service during the period of my academic journey in the department.

I also want to appreciate my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Makinde for standing as my backbone, biggest supporter and sponsor.

My gratitude goes to my beloved siblings too, Bro Segun, Bro Gbemi and Bro Gbohunmi for standing by me.

I cannot but appreciate my fellowship, Deeper Life Campus Fellowship for raising a standard and showing great support.

Special thanks to my friends, Oluwafolakemi, Blessing, Priscilla, my classmates and every other person not mentioned for their support throughout the journey. Thank you all.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CERTIFICATION .....	iii
DEDICATION .....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	vi
ABSTRACT .....	viii
<b>CHAPTER ONE .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Background of the study .....	1
Statement of the Problem .....	4
Research Questions .....	7
Hypotheses .....	7
Purpose of the Study .....	7
Significance of the Study .....	8
Scope and Delimitation of the study .....	9
Definition of Terms .....	10
<b>CHAPTER TWO .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE .....</b>	<b>11</b>
Conceptual Framework .....	11
History of Female participation in Sport .....	12
Sport and Gender .....	14
Family background and Sport participation .....	19
Influence of family education background on sport participation. ....	23
Influence of Religion on sport participation .....	27
Summary of Reviewed Related Literature .....	34
<b>CHAPTER THREE .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>38</b>
Research Design .....	38
Population of the Study .....	38
Sample and Sampling Techniques .....	39
Research Instrument .....	39
Validity of Research Instrument .....	39
Reliability of Research Instrument .....	40

Method of Data Collection .....	40
Method of Data Analysis .....	40
<b>CHAPTER FOUR .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>PRESENTATION OF RESULT AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>CHAPTER FIVE .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>51</b>
Summary of the Study .....	51
Conclusion .....	52
Recommendations .....	52
Suggestions for Further Studies .....	53
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>60</b>
APPENDIX I .....	60
APPENDIX II .....	62

## ABSTRACT

This study investigated the sociocultural factors influencing sport participation among female athletes in the University of Benin. The study specifically examined the relationship between family cultural background, family educational background, religion, socioeconomic status, and the participation of female students in sports. A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population comprised female athletes from various faculties in the university, and a structured questionnaire was used to collect data. A total of 105 completed questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC).

Findings revealed that a majority of the respondents came from modern or mixed cultural backgrounds, families with tertiary educational qualifications, and predominantly Christian households. Family cultural background showed a weak and statistically insignificant relationship with sport participation, while family educational background demonstrated a stronger positive influence. Religion exhibited minimal restrictive effects, as most respondents reported that their faith does not hinder their involvement in sports. Socioeconomic status also showed a positive but moderate relationship with sport participation, with respondents from business and civil servant households participating more actively than those from farming backgrounds.

The study concludes that improved awareness, supportive family structures, and inclusive institutional policies can enhance female participation in sports within the University of Benin. It recommends targeted sensitization programs, increased provision of female-friendly facilities, and sustained encouragement from families and the institution to promote gender-balanced sports involvement.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### **Background of the study**

Gender roles and cultural norms have played a major part in discouragement of female in sport participation in Nigeria. In many parts of Nigeria, sociocultural beliefs have traditionally discouraged female participation in sports. There is this perception that physical activity is unfeminine, which contradicts expected gender roles (Adetunji & Olanipekun, 2014). Cultural values, particularly in certain ethnic communities, often emphasize domestic roles for women over public or competitive activities (Eke, 2017). Religious beliefs may further restrict participation by discouraging physical exposure or interaction with males during sporting events (Adeleke, 2020).

Sport participation is widely acknowledged as an essential component of education and youth development. Within the university environment, it functions not only as a source of recreation but also as a channel for enhancing physical fitness, social interaction, discipline, and self-confidence. Through sports, students gain opportunities for personal growth, leadership, and teamwork, while also having the chance to represent their institutions in competitions such as the Nigerian University Games Association (NUGA). For female students in particular, participation in sports helps to challenge gender stereotypes, build self-esteem, and promote equality in academic and social spaces.

Despite these benefits, female participation in sports across Nigeria remains disproportionately lower than that of males. Cultural and religious norms, societal expectations, and family pressures often discourage women from engaging actively in sporting activities. Studies show that in many African contexts, including Nigeria, female athletes encounter discrimination, marginalization, and insufficient institutional support

compared to their male counterparts (Ademola & Onyeka, 2020). This persistent gap reflects entrenched sociocultural beliefs that frame sports as a predominantly male domain.

The University of Benin reflects a similar reality. Although the institution promotes student involvement in sports through inter-faculty competitions and university-wide programs, the rate of female participation remains significantly lower than that of male students. This disparity has been linked to factors such as limited encouragement from families, cultural expectations surrounding women's roles, inadequate representation of female coaches, and restricted access to sporting facilities. According to a report by the Nigerian University Games Association (2022), women made up less than 35% of participants in inter-university competitions, highlighting the scale of the gender gap in university sports.

In light of these challenges, it is important to critically investigate the sociocultural factors that shape female students' participation in sports at the University of Benin. Such an inquiry will not only shed light on the barriers they face but also provide valuable guidance for promoting inclusion, equity, and empowerment through sport.

Sociocultural factors refer to the social and cultural influences that shape how people think, act, and relate to others. These influences are deeply embedded in everyday life and play a significant role in how individuals make decisions and interact within their communities. They affect various areas such as education, health, work, and relationships. People's actions and views are often guided by the environments they grow up in and the expectations of the society around them. These influences shape behavior, define social roles, and affect how individuals understand and respond to situations. They also impact how families function, how communication takes place, and what is seen as acceptable within a society. Differences in access to resources, opportunities, and information can arise depending on these influences, ultimately shaping one's quality of life and chances for growth. They also contribute to a person's sense of identity and how they engage with others and larger systems.

Recognizing the impact of sociocultural influences is important for promoting inclusion, respect, and fairness. It helps individuals and organizations understand diverse perspectives and respond more effectively to the needs of different groups in society.

The way women perform and succeed in sport is often shaped by the society and culture around them. From family expectations to community beliefs, many social and cultural factors influence whether girls and women are encouraged to take part in sports, how far they can go, and how well they perform. Even though things have improved over the years, many of these influences still create barriers that make it harder for women to fully participate and thrive in the world of sport.

One major factor in socio-cultural is gender stereotypes. In many cultures, sports are seen as something more suited for men. Strength, competitiveness, and toughness are often linked with masculinity, so when women show these traits in sport, they're sometimes judged or not taken seriously. This kind of thinking can lower confidence in female athletes and discourage young girls from joining in.

Religious beliefs can also play a big role. In some societies, girls may be expected to dress modestly, stay at home, or avoid physical activities in public. These beliefs can prevent them from joining teams, training properly, or even competing. While these traditions are often deeply rooted, they can limit the potential of many talented young women.

Family and community support is another big influence. In many families, girls are expected to focus more on chores or academics than on physical activities. Without encouragement from parents or local leaders, it becomes harder for girls to stay motivated or take sports seriously.

Family support is a significant factor in determining whether a female student can pursue sports. In some households, girls are expected to prioritize household duties, education, or

early marriage over extracurricular activities, especially those households seen as "male-dominated" (Adejumo, 2018).

Another important issue is how women are shown in the media. Female athletes are often overlooked or portrayed in ways that focus more on how they look than on their achievements. This lack of visibility means fewer role models for young girls, and it can make women's sports seem less important.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite the global rise in advocacy for gender equity, females in Nigerian, including the female athletes in the University of Benin (UNIBEN), continue to face persistent sociocultural challenges that limit their participation and performance in athletics.

Sociocultural factors continue to pose significant, deeply rooted challenges for women in sport. These challenges stem from societal norms, traditions, gender roles, and the general attitudes of communities. Together, they form powerful barriers that limit the participation, performance, and visibility of female athletes across the world.

Some of these challenges are; Limited Opportunities to Participate, Gender Stereotypes and Societal Pressure, Lack of Family and Community Support, Inequality in Resources and Facilities, Poor Media Coverage and Representation, Cultural and Religious Restrictions, Mental Health Challenges, Few Women in Leadership and Decision-Making Roles.

In many cultures, sports are still viewed as a male-dominated domain. Girls are often discouraged from joining sports teams or being physically active, especially from a young age. The perception that sports are not "feminine" causes many girls to miss out on developing their talents early, resulting in fewer women progressing into elite sports.

There is a persistent belief in many communities that women are too fragile or emotional for intense physical competition. Female athletes may be shamed for being "too strong" or for

choosing sports typically associated with men, such as football or boxing. These stereotypes make it hard for women to break into sports without facing criticism or discrimination.

Support from family and community is critical to any athlete's journey. However, many girls are steered toward academic success or household responsibilities instead of physical activities. When families do not encourage sports participation, girls often feel discouraged or even pressured to quit, despite their passion or ability.

Women's sports programs frequently receive less funding, equipment, and coaching support compared to men's. Many female athletes train under substandard conditions or with limited professional guidance. This resource gap means that even talented women may not reach their full potential due to poor infrastructure and unequal investment.

Media plays a huge role in promoting sports, but women's sports are often ignored or under reported. When female athletes are covered, the attention is frequently on their looks or personal lives, rather than their skills and achievements. This lack of visibility affects sponsorship opportunities and limits the number of role models young girls can look up to.

In some communities, especially conservative or religious ones, women are restricted from participating in sports due to strict dress codes, gender segregation, or societal taboos. These limitations can prevent girls from being physically active or competing in public, leading to missed opportunities and feelings of shame or exclusion.

Being a female athlete in a male-dominated field can be emotionally exhausting. The pressure to perform, combined with societal judgment, lack of support, or disrespect from fans and officials, can lead to stress, anxiety, and low self-esteem. Mental health struggles are often overlooked, making it even harder for women to cope and thrive in their sport.

The absence of women in coaching, management, and executive positions within sports organizations limits mentorship and advocacy for female athletes. Without women in power

to champion gender-sensitive policies, critical issues like menstrual health, safety, and athlete welfare may not be addressed properly, leaving many women unsupported.

Efforts have been made at institutional and national levels to address these challenges. At UNIBEN, the establishment of sports programs and the inclusion of female categories in university games (NUGA) aimed to create equal opportunities. Nationally, Nigeria's Ministry of Youth and Sports Development introduced the *National Sports Industry Policy* (2021), which emphasizes inclusion and gender equality in sports. However, these interventions have largely focused on infrastructural or policy reforms without adequately addressing the deep-rooted cultural and social attitudes that continue to discourage female participation.

Previous studies have attempted to highlight these barriers. For instance, Akindutire & Oyeniyi (2012) explored inhibiting factors in Nigerian universities but provided limited empirical data on how these factors specifically affect athletes at the university level. Similarly, research conducted in Kogi and Ebonyi states (Ajadi & Falaye, 2021; Nwachukwu, 2023) identified cultural and religious factors as barriers, but they failed to examine the compound effects of peer perception, media portrayal, and the role of female mentorship in sports development. These studies also lacked context-specific analysis tailored to universities like UNIBEN, which has a diverse student body and relatively better sports facilities.

Furthermore, while existing research acknowledges the gender gap, few have engaged directly with the athletes themselves to understand their lived experiences, nor have they evaluated the effectiveness of existing programs and policies from the perspective of the beneficiaries. This omission leaves a critical gap in understanding why these efforts have not yielded significant change.

This study seeks to examine how these sociocultural factors collectively put a boundary to the growth, performance, and visibility of female athletes, specifically in regions where gender

inequality is most pronounced. Understanding these barriers is important for developing inclusive, effective and efficient strategies to support female participation and success in sport.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the relationship between family cultural background and sport participation among female students in the University of Benin.
2. What is the relationship between family educational background and sports participation among female students in the University of Benin.
3. What is the relationship between religion and sports participation among female students in the University of Benin.
4. What is the relationship between socio-economic status and sports participation among female students in the University of Benin.

### **Hypotheses**

1. There will be no significant relationship between family cultural background and sport participation among female students in the University of Benin.
2. There will be no significant relationship between family educational background and sport participation among female students in the University of Benin.
3. There will be no significant relationship between religion and sports participation among female students in the university of Benin.
4. There will be no significant relationship between socio-economic status and sports participation among female students in the University of Benin.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study focuses on examining the influence of sociocultural factors on female athletes at the University of Benin, University of Benin, Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to:

1. Establish the relationship between family cultural background and sport participation
2. Determine the relationship between family educational background and sport participation.
3. Ascertain the relationship between religion and sports participation.
4. Determine the relationship between socio-economic status and sports participation.

### **Significance of the Study**

This research is expected to provide insight into the sociocultural challenges affecting female athletes at UNIBEN. Findings will contribute to academic discourse on gender in sports, while also guiding university administrators and policymakers in crafting gender-sensitive policies and initiatives. By uncovering the dynamics at play, this study could empower female students, promote awareness, and encourage reforms that ensure equitable participation in athletics. It may also serve as a basis for future research and intervention programs aimed at reducing gender disparities in sports across Nigerian higher education institutions.

This study examining the influence of sociocultural factors on female athletes at the University of Benin is both timely and impactful, offering valuable academic and practical insights. It plays a vital role in broadening the scope of scholarly work on gender and sports within the Nigerian university system. While much of the existing research has focused on Western perspectives, relatively few studies have explored the specific challenges facing female student-athletes in Nigerian institutions. By focusing on the University of Benin, this research helps to fill that knowledge gap with context-specific findings.

The study also serves as a tool for increasing awareness of the various social and cultural barriers that hinder female participation in sports. These barriers often stem from long-

standing traditions, religious doctrines, and societal norms that define sports as a predominantly male domain. By exposing and analyzing these limitations, the study encourages open dialogue and challenges outdated beliefs that restrict female involvement in athletics.

Another important contribution of this study is its potential to influence policy and institutional practice. Insights from the research can guide university authorities, sports directors, and relevant associations such as the Nigerian University Games Association (NUGA) in formulating more inclusive and supportive sports policies. These may include increasing the presence of female coaches, enhancing access to gender-sensitive training environments, and creating programs that specifically address the needs of female athletes.

Moreover, the study highlights the importance of tailored support systems for female athletes. By identifying the cultural and social pressures they face, it becomes easier for institutions to design mentorship initiatives, counseling services, and other forms of support that can enhance participation and performance among female students in sports.

The research also aligns with broader efforts to promote gender equity in education and sports. Its findings offer practical guidance to stakeholders such as sports officials, lecturers, student organizations, NGOs, and policymakers who are committed to advancing gender equality. By providing evidence-based recommendations.

Above all, this study aims to empower female athletes by giving them visibility and a voice. It seeks to challenge systemic biases and contribute to lasting cultural and institutional change. In doing so, the research supports global objectives related to youth empowerment, inclusive education, and gender-balanced participation in sports. Rather than merely identifying a problem, the study is positioned as a catalyst for practical solutions and progressive change.

### **Scope and Delimitation of the study**

This study focuses on exploring the influence of sociocultural factors on sport participation among female athletes at the University of Benin (UNIBEN)

The research will primarily cover undergraduate female students who are actively engaged in sports, either through university teams, departmental clubs, or inter-faculty competitions.

### **Definition of Terms**

#### **1. Sociocultural Factors**

These refer to the social and cultural influences that shape people's behaviors and perceptions. In the context of this study, sociocultural factors include traditional gender roles, religious beliefs, societal expectations, and cultural attitudes that can affect how female students engage with sports and physical activity (Coakley, 2015).

#### **2. Female Athletes**

This term describes women and girls who participate in physical sports or athletic competitions, whether casually, recreationally, or professionally. In this research, it specifically refers to female students at the University of Benin who are involved in organized sports within the university setting (Messner, 2002).

#### **3. Sport**

In this study, sport is defined as structured physical activities and competitions that involve physical effort, skill, and rules, organization. It includes both individual and team events, such as athletics, football, basketball and others facilitated by formal or informal bodies.(Coakley, 2015)

#### **4. Participation**

Participation refers to the active involvement of female students in sports, including training, playing in teams, attending practices or representing their school in competitions. (Green, 2005).

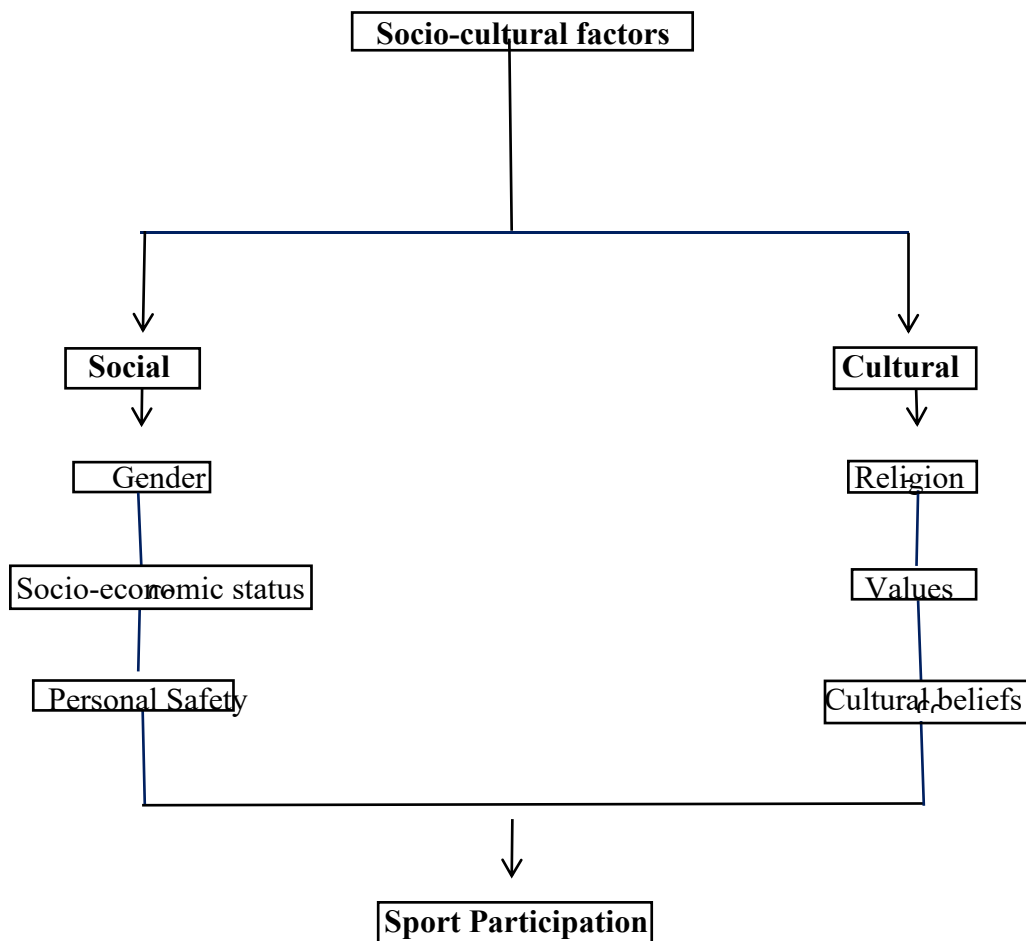
## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter is reviewed under the following sub-headings:

- Conceptual Framework
- Historical perspective of female participation in sport
- Gender and sport
- Family cultural background and Sport participation
- Family education background and sport participation.
- Religion and sport participation
- Summary of Reviewed Related Literature

#### Conceptual Framework



The conceptual framework of this research is grounded on two major factors which are social factors and cultural factors.

### **History of Female participation in Sport**

The introduction of sports into Nigeria is largely attributed to colonial influence and the spread of Western education. One of the earliest avenues for organized sporting activities was the Empire Day, which offered the first official platform for competition, with the earliest recorded organized sport taking place in 1910. Women's involvement in competitive sports in Nigeria has been documented across various historical stages: the post-independence era (1960–1966), the post-first republic military regime (1966–1978), the second republic (1979–1983), and from 1984 to the present. Across these periods, there has been a gradual increase in female participation in sports (NTI, 2007).

Historically, men's participation in sports has always been higher than that of women. Dalen and Bennett (1971) noted that women were traditionally discouraged from engaging in vigorous physical activities. In ancient Athens, for instance, boys actively participated in physical education while girls were confined to domestic duties, supporting their mothers and engaging in cultural roles such as singing songs of praise, presenting gifts, and celebrating victories. According to NTI (2007), just as women had to struggle for political and professional recognition, they equally had to fight for the right to physical fitness and competitive participation in athletics.

The story of women in sport has been one of gradual progress in the face of cultural, social, and institutional obstacles. Across the world, women were for a long time discouraged from taking part in competitive or strenuous physical activities, as traditional beliefs assigned them to domestic roles. In ancient Athens, for example, girls were excluded from formal physical training, which was reserved for boys as part of their military and civic preparation. Women's roles were limited to singing, dancing, or celebrating victories. Sparta, however, presented a

different picture, as girls were allowed to take part in exercises, festivals, and processions, marking some of the earliest recognition of female involvement in sport (Dalen & Bennett, 1971).

In the modern era, women were initially excluded from the first Olympic Games in 1896 but were allowed to compete in a few events such as tennis and golf by 1900. Over time, women's inclusion grew, largely driven by advocacy for gender equality and global campaigns for women's rights. The Title IX legislation in the United States (1972), which mandated equal opportunities in education and sports, became a turning point that influenced women's participation worldwide.

In Nigeria, organized sport was introduced through colonialism and missionary schools, where physical education and competitions were encouraged. The first recorded formal sport competition took place in 1910 during Empire Day celebrations, though it was mostly male-dominated (NTI, 2007). Women's participation became more visible after independence in 1960, especially in school and university competitions, including those organized by the Nigerian University Games Association (NUGA).

The development of women's sports in Nigeria can be grouped into phases: the early independence years (1960–1966), the post-first republic military regime (1966–1978), the second republic (1979–1983), and from 1984 to the present (NTI, 2007). Each stage saw gradual increases in women's participation, despite resistance from cultural and religious traditions. By the 1980s and 1990s, female athletes like Chioma Ajunwa, Mary Onyali, and Falilat Ogunkoya began to dominate the international scene. Ajunwa's gold medal in the long jump at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics was historic, as she became Nigeria's first Olympic gold medalist, proving the capability of women in sports.

Nevertheless, women's involvement in sports in Nigeria still lags behind men's. Persistent gender stereotypes, family restrictions, poor access to facilities, and lack of female role

models continue to limit their participation. For example, NUGA (2022) reported that women represented less than 35% of athletes in inter-university competitions, underscoring the enduring gender imbalance. On a global scale, while the International Olympic Committee (IOC, 2021) reported that women made up 48% of athletes at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, gaps still remain in terms of funding, leadership, and media recognition.

Overall, the history of women in sport highlights a slow but steady journey toward inclusion. Although great progress has been made globally and in Nigeria, particularly through education and university competitions, female athletes continue to face systemic challenges. Understanding this history helps to frame the ongoing struggles for equality and emphasizes the importance of research and policies that promote women's full participation in sports.

### **Sport and Gender**

Sport has long been understood as a gendered social institution that mirrors and reinforces cultural expectations of masculinity and femininity. Historically, male athletes were positioned at the center of competitive and physically demanding sports, while women were either excluded outright or steered toward activities that highlighted elegance, beauty, and restricted forms of physicality (Hargreaves, 1994). This division meant that sport was not only a platform for recreation and competition but also a mechanism for reproducing social inequalities between men and women. In many African contexts, for example, prevailing cultural values prioritized women's modesty, domestic responsibilities, and reproductive roles, thereby marginalizing their presence in organized sport (Saavedra, 2009).

The gendered structure of sport can be examined through Social Role Theory, which highlights how gender stereotypes shape behaviors and opportunities. Men are socialized to embrace competitiveness, assertiveness, and strength—qualities that align closely with dominant sporting ideals. Women, in contrast, are expected to embody nurturing, modesty, and passivity, traits often seen as incompatible with competitive athleticism (Eagly & Wood,

2012). This ideological divide has created boundaries within sport: football, basketball, and athletics are constructed as male arenas, while women are directed into “feminine” sports such as gymnastics or dance. These norms continue to shape female participation in sports today, even in academic institutions.

Globally, efforts to achieve gender equity in sport have made significant progress, though challenges remain. The Olympic Games provide a striking example of this trajectory. Women were denied participation in the first modern Olympic Games in 1896, and only gradually allowed into selected disciplines in subsequent decades (Pfister, 2010). By the Tokyo 2020 Games, women made up 48% of competitors, while the Paris 2024 Games achieved full gender parity for the first time (IOC, 2021; IOC, 2024). Yet, parity in numbers does not necessarily translate into equity of experience. Female athletes still receive disproportionately less sponsorship, media exposure, and recognition than men (Cooky et al., 2021). These inequalities illustrate how structural gender biases remain deeply embedded in sport despite visible reforms.

Within Africa, the relationship between sport and gender has been shaped by both cultural resistance and women’s resilience. Many traditions have historically discouraged women from public displays of physical power, often branding sport as unfeminine or socially inappropriate (Adjepong, 2015). Religious prescriptions in some communities also limit female participation in contact sports or those requiring less conservative attire. Nonetheless, African women have made substantial contributions to global sport. The achievements of Nigerian sprinter Blessing Okagbare and South Africa’s Caster Semenya demonstrate how women athletes not only succeed competitively but also challenge deeply entrenched norms around gender, identity, and performance (Mogaji, 2020). Within African universities, however, female students often remain underrepresented in sport due to a combination of institutional neglect and sociocultural restrictions (Ajadi, 2021; Kubayi, 2015).

Research on university sport highlights the persistence of gendered barriers. Female students are frequently motivated to participate in sport for reasons such as fitness, self-esteem, and social belonging, yet their involvement is curtailed by stereotypes, family expectations, and lack of institutional support (Leslie-Walker, 2023). Problems such as inadequate facilities, the scarcity of female coaches, and the absence of gender-sensitive policies reinforce the notion that sport belongs primarily to men. Furthermore, media portrayals often undervalue women's achievements, focusing instead on physical appearance rather than athletic skill (Cooky & Antunovic, 2020). As a result, universities reproduce broader social inequalities even as they provide new spaces for female participation.

Recent scholarship also underscores the potential of sport to function as a tool of empowerment when enabling conditions are present. According to Lim and Dixon (2018), participation in sport can strengthen women's confidence, leadership abilities, and sense of autonomy, but this empowerment depends heavily on supportive institutional structures. Equal funding, adequate recognition, and cultural acceptance are necessary for these benefits to be realized. For African universities in particular, where female students frequently balance academic expectations with cultural constraints, sport offers a powerful avenue for self-expression and resilience if supported appropriately (Adom-Aboagye, 2023).

The intersection of sport and gender has been the subject of extensive academic inquiry, with widespread agreement that women's participation in athletics is influenced by sociocultural, institutional, and personal dynamics. Sport is increasingly recognized not as a neutral activity but as a social construct that reflects and reinforces cultural understandings of gender roles (Hargreaves, 1994; Messner, 2002). In many parts of the world, particularly across Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, sporting spaces have long been characterized as male-oriented, which has relegated women to the margins and restricted their engagement.

A dominant theme in the literature concerns the role of cultural traditions and gendered norms. Studies in Nigeria reveal that societal expectations related to femininity, modesty, and domestic roles discourage women from taking part in competitive sports (Ogidan, Onifade, & Ologele, 2013). Comparable findings are reported in Pakistan, where Naseer, Javed, and Batool (2020) observed that women often face criticism for their sports attire and achievements, diminishing their visibility and recognition. Such studies underscore how cultural and religious values often position sports as incompatible with femininity, thereby perpetuating the stereotype of athleticism as a masculine pursuit.

Family support and background also play a critical role in shaping female participation in sport. Families frequently act as either facilitators or barriers. For instance, Agaba (2023), in a study conducted at Makerere University, highlighted that female students rarely received moral or financial encouragement from family members, while also struggling with issues of safety and low self-confidence. Similarly, Ossai and Nwabuwe (2024) found that restrictive family values, together with rigid gender expectations, predict reduced female involvement in university sports. Conversely, when families provide encouragement, recognition, and resources, young women are far more likely to sustain their involvement in athletics.

Institutional practices are another crucial factor influencing gendered participation. Scholars point to the absence of female coaches, inequitable allocation of sports budgets, and lack of gender-sensitive facilities as key barriers within African universities (Skyline University, n.d.; Ogidan et al., 2013). At Makerere University, Agaba (2023) observed that the scarcity of female coaches created a void in mentorship and role modeling, leaving many female athletes without adequate representation. In Nigeria, Skyline University (n.d.) reported that disparities in funding and limited opportunities for women entrenched inequalities. These findings emphasize the importance of institutional policies and structures, which can either challenge or reinforce existing sociocultural barriers.

On an individual level, peer dynamics and self-perception significantly influence female athletes' decisions to participate in sports. Naseer et al. (2020) argued that low peer recognition and negative community perceptions discourage participation, whereas supportive peer groups create a sense of belonging. Additionally, biological and health-related issues, such as menstruation, are frequently stigmatized, creating additional hurdles for women in sports settings (Agaba, 2023). This demonstrates that women's participation is not only shaped by external cultural and institutional factors but also mediated by personal and psychological experiences.

Despite these obstacles, the literature also highlights the transformative potential of sport for women. When institutions implement inclusive policies and create supportive environments, sport becomes a tool for empowerment. Lim and Dixon (2018) argue that inclusive sports settings build women's confidence, leadership capacity, and sense of agency. Other studies confirm that universities play a pivotal role in determining whether sport becomes a site of exclusion or empowerment (Skyline University, n.d.; Ossai & Nwabuwe, 2024). The adoption of gender-sensitive policies, provision of equitable resources, and recognition of female achievements are therefore crucial for transforming women's sporting experiences.

Collectively, these studies reveal that sport and gender are closely interconnected, with participation shaped by family upbringing, cultural traditions, institutional arrangements, and personal perceptions. For female students, sport represents more than physical activity; it involves navigating long-standing cultural expectations, overcoming structural barriers, and claiming agency in a space historically dominated by men. These insights provide a strong foundation for understanding the experiences of female athletes at the University of Benin, where similar sociocultural and institutional forces mediate women's involvement in sports.

Existing literature shows that sport continues to be shaped by gendered expectations, cultural traditions, and institutional policies. While global advocacy and policy reforms have

broadened female inclusion in sport, persistent stereotypes, unequal opportunities, and structural barriers continue to hinder women's full engagement. For African universities, addressing these issues requires not only challenging cultural restrictions but also building institutional frameworks that highlight the empowering and transformative potential of sport for female students.

### **Family background and Sport participation**

The family is universally acknowledged as the primary socializing unit, and its impact on sport participation is significant. Family background encompasses economic standing, cultural and religious orientation, gender expectations, and parental values, all of which collectively determine whether young people especially women are encouraged or discouraged from engaging in sports. For female athletes in universities, these influences often take root from early childhood and continue to shape both their opportunities and challenges in pursuing athletic involvement.

Parents, in particular, play a central role in guiding a child's relationship with sport. Studies show that when parents actively endorse and model sporting behavior, their children are more likely to participate in physical activities (Fredricks & Eccles, 2005). In the case of female athletes, such support may come in the form of financial assistance for training, encouragement to pursue athletics, or the assurance that sport is appropriate for women. Conversely, in many African societies, parents may hold on to the belief that sport is a masculine endeavor, viewing it as a distraction from academic or domestic responsibilities for girls (Adjepong, 2015). These attitudes often limit the confidence and exposure of female athletes, reducing their chances of consistent participation.

Economic status further shapes the extent to which families can support sporting ambitions. Wealthier households are able to provide resources such as equipment, coaching, and transportation to training venues and competitions (Coakley, 2015). These investments give

female athletes a stronger foundation for development and sustained involvement. On the other hand, students from low-income backgrounds frequently struggle to access such opportunities, with financial hardship often compounded by gender bias, where male children are given priority in resource allocation (Okeke, 2020). This creates an uneven playing field that disproportionately disadvantages female athletes.

Siblings and extended relatives also influence sport participation. Girls with siblings who are active in sports—especially sisters—tend to view athletics as normal and attainable (Horn & Horn, 2007). Extended family members can sometimes counterbalance parental restrictions by offering encouragement and alternative perspectives that legitimize female participation. Yet in contexts like Nigeria, extended family disapproval can also be a major barrier. Concerns about immodesty, morality, or the risk of female athletes traveling for competitions often prevent women from pursuing athletics fully (Ajadi, 2021).

Religious and cultural beliefs within families also determine women's opportunities in sport. Families who uphold conservative religious traditions may limit female participation due to expectations of modest dress, segregation by gender, or the belief that athletics contradicts traditional family roles (Amara, 2012). For example, some Muslim women in Nigeria are discouraged from participating in sports requiring uniforms that conflict with prescribed modesty norms. While these restrictions are often framed as religious, they are also deeply tied to cultural perceptions of femininity and women's responsibilities within the household.

Psychologically, family background influences the confidence and resilience of female athletes. Supportive parents help to build self-esteem, motivation, and persistence, while disapproving households often instill self-doubt that leads to withdrawal from sports (Leslie-Walker, 2023). At the university level, where female athletes must balance academic workloads with demanding training, emotional and moral support from family becomes essential for sustaining participation.

Intergenerational patterns also play a part in shaping sporting involvement. Families with a history of athletic participation often pass down values that normalize sport for both boys and girls (Green & Chalip, 1997). In Nigerian universities, women with parents or older siblings who engaged in sports are more likely to participate themselves, having inherited not only the skills but also the belief that sports are a legitimate pursuit for women. Families without such traditions, however, may dismiss athletics as a waste of time or as inappropriate for daughters. Overall, family background functions both as an enabler and as a barrier to female sport participation. Supportive families provide resources, encouragement, and validation, creating opportunities for women to thrive in athletics. Restrictive families, on the other hand, perpetuate cultural and gendered limitations that discourage women from pursuing sports. This dual role underscores the need to involve families in sport development strategies. Universities could engage parents and guardians through awareness programs and cultural sensitization campaigns that challenge stereotypes and highlight the educational, social, and professional benefits of sport for women.

The family remains a central factor in shaping women's participation in sports. Its influence is multifaceted ranging from financial capacity and cultural expectations to emotional support and generational traditions. While enabling family environments encourage confidence, access, and long-term involvement in sports, restrictive backgrounds reinforce inequality and discourage female engagement. For institutions such as the University of Benin, addressing family-related barriers is essential for promoting gender equity and empowerment through sport.

In many societies, particularly in Africa, family values strongly reflect cultural and religious norms that often view sport as an activity more suitable for men. This perception is passed down to young women through parental expectations and household practices. Parents who hold conservative views about gender roles frequently restrict their daughters' involvement in

competitive sports, emphasizing academic achievement, domestic responsibilities, or modest behavior instead. Such attitudes reinforce the belief that athleticism is incompatible with femininity, leading to limited participation opportunities for female students in higher education (Ossai & Nwabuwe, 2024).

On the other hand, families that provide encouragement whether through financial support, attending games, or celebrating achievements create an enabling environment that sustains participation. Agaba (2023), in a study at Makerere University, observed that many female athletes lacked moral and financial encouragement from their families, which undermined their confidence and restricted their ability to compete. This contrasts with findings from contexts where supportive family environments exist, as daughters of parents who value sport are more likely to engage actively and persist in athletics despite external challenges.

Financial resources also play a central role. Families with higher socioeconomic status are more capable of providing sports equipment, covering transportation costs, and enrolling children in extracurricular training. These investments are crucial for female athletes, who often face limited institutional support. Conversely, students from lower-income families are less able to afford these resources, leading to a reduction in opportunities for sustained participation. This inequality reflects broader social structures in which class and gender intersect to shape access to sport.

Additionally, the influence of siblings and extended family members should not be overlooked. Encouragement from brothers, sisters, or cousins can either reinforce gender stereotypes or challenge them. In families where male siblings are prioritized in sports, female members often feel sidelined, which reinforces their sense of exclusion. However, in households where female talent is recognized and celebrated, young women are more likely to develop self-belief and resilience in pursuing sport, even in the face of societal disapproval.

Moreover, religious background within the family can serve as either a facilitator or barrier. In some Nigerian communities, strict interpretations of religion discourage women from wearing certain sporting attire or participating in public competitions, which limits their engagement. Families that adhere to such norms may actively discourage participation, while those adopting more flexible interpretations may allow greater freedom.

Ultimately, Family background is one of the most significant determinants of female participation in sports, as it provides the earliest environment in which attitudes toward physical activity and gender roles are shaped. The family acts both as a support system and as a regulatory structure, influencing whether young women are encouraged to pursue sports or discouraged due to cultural expectations. Family background serves as both the foundation and the filter through which female students experience sports. It shapes their access to resources, their psychological confidence, and their perception of what is socially acceptable. In university settings, these early influences continue to play a role, as students often rely on family approval and support to balance sports with academic life. Therefore, understanding family dynamics is essential to explaining why some female students thrive in athletics while others remain excluded.

### **Influence of family education background on sport participation.**

Family educational background operates through three main pathways that recur across the literature: knowledge and valuational capital; parents with more schooling tend to understand and value the developmental returns of sport and are better positioned to frame it as compatible with academics; resource navigation; educated parents more readily locate information, programs, and mentors and help daughters solve logistical barriers; and socialization practices; home routines and expectations about time use, modesty, and public visibility are often grounded in parents' education-shaped worldviews. Where these pathways are positive, participation rises; where they are restrictive, participation stalls.

The Nigerian evidence base repeatedly links family education to attitudes that legitimize or delegitimize girls' sport. Ogidan, Onifade, and Ologele (2013) found that cultural and religious expectations depress women's participation at the University; while the study did not isolate parental schooling quantitatively, their discussion points to intergenerational transmission of beliefs, more common in families with limited exposure to co-curricular education, constraining daughters' involvement. Ajadi (2021) similarly reports that socio-cultural determinants in Nigerian tertiary institutions include parental expectations that prioritize academics and domestic roles over athletics; here, parental education emerges implicitly as a moderator: parents who understand sport's academic and psychosocial benefits are more supportive of balanced participation. Ossai and Nwabuwe (2024) strengthen this pattern by showing that rigid family norms (often nested in lower-education households) predict lower female engagement; they recommend family sensitization—an intervention that typically works best when it raises parents' knowledge to the level provided by formal schooling.

Two studies highlight how family educational background shapes concrete support behaviors. Agaba's Makerere dissertation (2023) notes low parental encouragement, representation, and recognition for women's sport. Although parental education was not measured directly, qualitative accounts indicate that parents with limited schooling were more likely to view university sport as a distraction from degrees, withhold transport or fee support, and discourage public athletic visibility. Leslie Walker (2023) shows that West African female students often possess strong personal motivation but face family-level frictions over time allocation and reputational concerns; these frictions diminish when parents articulate "dual-career" narratives an outlook more common among educated families who have encountered co-curricular models in their own schooling.

Cross-country qualitative work (Naseer, Javed, & Batool, 2020) identifies family recognition and legitimacy as decisive. In rural Pakistan, families frequently discount women's athletic achievements and criticize attire. While the study centers culture, the patterns map onto education: parents with limited schooling are less exposed to school-sport integration and less likely to view female athletic participation as respectable civic achievement. Conversely, when parents have secondary/tertiary education, they more often authorize daughters' participation, renegotiate attire/workarounds, and advocate with schools, behaviors the authors classify as social support.

Institutional commentaries and case materials from Nigeria converge on the same mechanisms. Skyline University Nigeria (n.d.) argues that low participation is partly sustained by family-level misconceptions about the "returns" to women's sport and by the absence of female role models; both are knowledge problems that family education can remedy. Kubayi (2015), working in South Africa, similarly lists cultural ideology, religion, and perceptions of sport as "male" as core constraints; while not a test of parental education, her discussion implies that education broadens horizons about acceptable female pursuits and buffers conservative gatekeeping. Adom-Aboagye (2023) focuses on leadership underrepresentation, but her analysis of pipeline and policy suggests that families with more education are likelier to normalize girls' sustained participation across school levels, feeding the future talent and leadership pool. Together these studies imply a "knowledge ladder": as family education rises, girls encounter earlier, steadier, and longer support.

Two additional strands nuance the picture. First, not all highly educated families are enabling. Several studies caution that some well-educated parents—especially where academic competition is intense—steer daughters away from time-consuming sport in favor of grades. This substitution logic appears in Leslie-Walker's (2023) accounts of "time triage," and in Nigerian samples (Ajadi, 2021; Ossai & Nwabuwe, 2024) where educated but exam-focused

parents still discourage competitive sport near assessment periods. Second, education interacts with religion and culture rather than replacing them. For example, Naseer et al. (2020) and the Nigerian studies report that even educated parents may insist on modesty codes or sport types deemed “appropriate,” producing partial, conditional participation rather than full access.

Across the sources, direct measurement of parental schooling is scarce; most evidence is indirect (via attitudes, support behaviors, or SES). Nevertheless, a consistent causal narrative emerges. Families with higher educational background tend to: recognize sport’s links to health, confidence, leadership, and employability; engage proactively with coaches and programs; solve transport, equipment, and safety issues; and validate daughters’ athletic identities alongside academics. Families with lower educational exposure more often reproduce restrictive gender scripts, underinvest in sport, and frame athletics as incompatible with serious study. Where “education-rich” families still restrict, the mechanism is typically academic gating (time costs) rather than moral disapproval, suggesting different policy levers for each profile.

For university contexts—such as the University of Benin—the implications are practical. First, parent-facing communication should be educational: show evidence on sport’s academic, psychosocial, and career benefits, highlight successful female alumni, and explain load-management supports (study halls, season calendars). Second, involve families in orientation and scholarship ceremonies to elevate the social status of women’s sport. Third, create culturally sensitive participation pathways (e.g., uniform options, women-only training slots) that allow even conservative but education-open families to authorize involvement. Finally, partner with secondary schools to normalize “dual-career” development earlier in the pipeline; by the time students reach UNIBEN, family beliefs are already patterned by years of schooling-home interactions.

## **Influence of Religion on sport participation**

The relationship between religion and sport has deep historical roots, with both institutions often intersecting in ways that either encouraged or restricted participation. In ancient societies, sport was frequently tied to religious rituals. For example, in ancient Greece, the Olympic Games were originally established as a religious festival honoring Zeus. Athletic participation was therefore not only a physical pursuit but also a spiritual and communal duty (Guttmann, 2004). However, women were excluded from these events, reflecting the patriarchal religious and cultural norms of the time. Similar patterns could be observed in other cultures, where religious traditions shaped who could participate in physical activities and for what purposes.

During the medieval period in Europe, Christianity played a major role in shaping attitudes toward sport. The church often viewed competitive games and physical contests as distractions from spiritual devotion. Certain sports were condemned as pagan practices or sinful amusements, and participation was discouraged, especially among women (Watson & Weir, 2018). However, physical activity was also promoted in specific religious contexts, such as monastic orders, where it was seen as a means of discipline and bodily control. This ambivalence characterized the church's stance for centuries, balancing between seeing sport as moral development and as worldly indulgence.

In the Islamic world, historical attitudes toward sport were also shaped by religious teachings. Early Islamic traditions encouraged physical activity such as archery, swimming, and horse riding, emphasizing health, discipline, and preparedness for communal defense (Kahan, 2003). However, as cultural interpretations of modesty and gender segregation developed, restrictions on female participation became more prominent. This was particularly evident in conservative societies where religious norms were strongly linked to cultural patriarchy.

In Nigeria, the historical influence of religion on sport has been pronounced due to the coexistence of Christianity, Islam, and indigenous belief systems. Pre-colonial indigenous practices often involved wrestling, dancing, and other physical activities tied to traditional religious festivals, where men and women sometimes participated in different but complementary roles (Adedeji, 2010). With colonialism, Christian missionaries introduced Western education and organized sports, but their religious worldview also reinforced gender divisions. Sports like football, cricket, and athletics were promoted among boys, while girls were often restricted to domestic training or limited forms of recreation, justified by Christian moral teachings about femininity and modesty (Amusa & Toriola, 2003).

In Northern Nigeria, where Islam was and remains dominant, religious perspectives historically reinforced cultural restrictions on female sport participation. Practices of seclusion (*purdah*) limited women's involvement in outdoor physical activity, and modesty requirements further reduced their visibility in athletics (Adamu, 2015). This created a long-standing cultural narrative that sport was incompatible with the ideals of womanhood in Muslim communities. However, in recent years, global movements for inclusivity—such as FIFA's 2014 acceptance of the hijab—have begun to challenge these historical restrictions and create new opportunities for Muslim women athletes.

Globally, the 20th century witnessed a shift in religious attitudes toward sport, particularly with the rise of the modern Olympic movement. While religion continued to shape norms, new interpretations emphasized the compatibility of sport with values like discipline, moral strength, and community development. In Christian contexts, churches began to sponsor sporting activities as part of youth development and evangelism (Watson & Parker, 2013). In Islam, scholars increasingly highlighted the Prophet Muhammad's encouragement of physical activity, using this to justify female participation within modest boundaries. In Nigeria, these

shifts gradually opened space for women in university sports, though sociocultural and religious barriers remain influential.

Beyond doctrinal beliefs, the daily and seasonal practices associated with religion also shape how individuals engage in sport. Religious rituals, festivals, prayer obligations, and dietary restrictions often intersect with the scheduling, training, and performance demands of athletic life. For female athletes in particular, these practices can either facilitate or hinder participation, depending on how they are structured and interpreted.

In Christianity, Sunday worship is central, and this sometimes conflicts with training sessions or competitions scheduled on weekends. Historically, Christian organizations in Europe and Africa discouraged competitive events on Sundays to preserve the sanctity of worship (Watson & Parker, 2013). In Nigerian universities, this tension persists, as students who are committed to church attendance may find themselves unable to fully commit to training regimens or inter-university competitions. At the same time, Christian institutions have increasingly incorporated sport into religious activities, such as fellowship games, youth tournaments, or recreational events, which provide female students with opportunities to participate in athletics within a faith-based environment (Amusa & Toriola, 2003).

Islamic practices also have a strong impact on sport participation. One of the most significant examples is the fasting period of Ramadan, which affects athletes' diet, hydration, and energy levels. For female athletes, balancing intensive physical activity with the demands of fasting presents unique challenges, particularly in high-competition periods (Farooq & Parker, 2009). Moreover, daily prayer obligations require time and space for observance, which can sometimes disrupt training schedules if sport facilities do not accommodate religious practices. Female Muslim athletes in Nigerian universities also face additional constraints due to dress codes; the need to wear hijab-compliant uniforms can limit comfort and mobility if not properly designed (Walseth & Fasting, 2003). Nevertheless, some sports organizations

and universities have begun to introduce modified uniforms that align with religious expectations, making participation more inclusive.

In African traditional religions, festivals are often accompanied by sporting or physical displays, such as wrestling, running, or ceremonial dances (Adedeji, 2010). These cultural practices sometimes provide platforms for women to participate in sport-related activities, though often within gender-specific roles. Female athletes may be more visible during cultural events than in formal sports competitions, but participation tends to emphasize artistry and cultural symbolism rather than competitiveness.

Religious festivals and holidays also intersect with sporting calendars in ways that can influence participation. For example, Christian and Muslim holidays often overlap with university academic breaks, which can affect the scheduling of inter-university tournaments such as the Nigerian University Games Association (NUGA). For female athletes, who already face social and cultural barriers, these disruptions may further limit consistent involvement in training and competition.

Despite these challenges, religious practices can also serve as opportunities for sport participation. Faith-based youth programs, church-organized recreational events, and mosque-based community activities have been shown to encourage girls' involvement in physical activity, especially when framed as promoting health, discipline, and social cohesion (Eitzen & Sage, 2009). In this sense, religion not only restricts but also creates avenues for participation when practices are interpreted in inclusive ways.

At the University of Benin, the influence of religious practices is evident in female students' participation patterns. Some Christian athletes adjust training schedules to accommodate church activities, while Muslim students navigate challenges around fasting and modest uniforms. Where universities are proactive in recognizing these religious needs—such as

adjusting competition times during Ramadan or supporting appropriate sports attire—female athletes are better able to reconcile their faith commitments with their athletic aspirations.

Religious dress requirements remain one of the most visible ways through which faith shapes women's involvement in sport. These rules, often rooted in sacred teachings and cultural traditions, define how women are expected to appear in public spaces, including sporting arenas. For female athletes, such prescriptions can either serve as constraints or become opportunities when adapted to athletic contexts.

In Islamic practice, modesty is a central value for women, reflected in garments such as the hijab, jilbab, or abaya. While these outfits uphold religious expectations, they may create difficulties for sporting activities that demand freedom of movement, speed, or specialized clothing, such as swimming, gymnastics, or athletics. Standardized sports uniforms, often designed with Western performance ideals in mind, may not align with these modesty codes, leading some Muslim women to withdraw from or be excluded from competitions (Walseth & Fasting, 2003). In recent years, however, the emergence of sports hijabs and full-coverage athletic wear from brands like Nike and Adidas has enabled Muslim women to compete without compromising their faith (Pfister, 2010). These innovations illustrate how inclusive sportswear design can promote broader female participation.

Although Christian traditions generally impose fewer strict rules on women's dress than Islam, modesty remains a recurring theme in many denominations. Conservative Christian groups often emphasize clothing that avoids revealing the body. This can discourage involvement in sports where uniforms are form-fitting, such as volleyball or track and field, as athletes may fear criticism for immodesty. For some Christian families, their daughters' involvement in sports depends on whether the uniforms are considered "decent" and consistent with religious values (Watson & Parker, 2013). Thus, even within Christianity, expectations around modesty can serve as subtle barriers to participation.

In African traditional religions, explicit dress codes are less common, yet cultural values linked to spirituality and womanhood strongly influence what is regarded as proper attire for women. Traditional clothing often symbolizes dignity, morality, and cultural heritage. Consequently, when women wear modern sports uniforms that expose more of the body, they may be viewed as disregarding cultural norms. This tension between cultural dress expectations and modern sporting attire can discourage female involvement, particularly in competitive contexts (Adedeji, 2010).

The impact of these dress codes extends beyond clothing alone, shaping access and opportunities in sport. Women unable to reconcile religious dress with athletic requirements may forgo participation, leading to underrepresentation in organized sports. In Nigeria, for example, many young women in the north, where Islamic traditions are strong, opt out of athletics due to conflicts with modesty norms. Even at institutions such as the University of Benin, female athletes sometimes encounter family or peer pressure to conform to religious expectations, making them hesitant to engage in sports requiring revealing uniforms.

Despite these challenges, progress has been made. International sports bodies, such as FIFA's 2014 decision to permit head coverings in women's football, demonstrate a growing recognition of religious diversity in sport. Likewise, universities that implement flexible uniform policies—allowing leggings, long sleeves, or custom attire—help female athletes balance religious commitment with sporting ambition (Lim & Dixon, 2018). Such measures not only enhance participation but also reflect an institutional commitment to inclusivity.

Although religion is frequently portrayed as a limiting factor in women's participation in sport, it can also function as a powerful source of strength and empowerment when expressed in supportive contexts. Religious beliefs and practices often promote resilience, discipline, moral integrity, and a sense of belonging—qualities that can enrich women's experiences in

both competitive and recreational sport. For many athletes, faith does not act solely as a barrier; instead, it serves as a driving force that sustains motivation and engagement.

One important way in which religion empowers female athletes is by nurturing discipline and self-control. Most faith traditions emphasize perseverance, patience, and commitment—virtues that are also vital to athletic success. Within Christianity, for instance, the teaching that the body is “the temple of the Holy Spirit” encourages healthy living, fitness, and responsible habits, indirectly supporting women’s involvement in sport (Watson & Parker, 2013). Similarly, Islamic practices such as fasting during Ramadan or maintaining regular prayers foster endurance, time management, and mental focus, all of which can positively influence sports training and competition (Walseth & Fasting, 2003).

Faith also provides a deep sense of purpose and inspiration. Many female athletes view their involvement in sport as more than a personal pursuit; they interpret it as a way to honor God, display moral character, or serve as role models in their communities. This perspective elevates sport to a spiritual mission, enabling women to persist despite challenges or societal barriers. For example, in Nigeria, athletes from faith-based institutions often describe their participation in sport as part of their ministry, using their talent as a platform to inspire others while staying true to their religious convictions (Adedeji, 2010).

Moreover, religion can foster inclusive opportunities for women by creating faith-friendly sporting environments. Churches, mosques, and religious organizations frequently sponsor athletic events—from inter-church tournaments to community fitness programs—that encourage female participation. These spaces are not only supportive but also protect women from criticism they might encounter in secular sport arenas. When athletic engagement aligns with religious approval, women’s participation is legitimized and often better accepted by families and communities (Lim & Dixon, 2018).

Religion also supports psychological well-being in sport. Prayer, meditation, and other faith practices serve as coping mechanisms for stress, performance anxiety, and competitive pressures. Athletes who rely on their faith often show greater confidence and emotional stability, viewing setbacks not as failures but as opportunities for spiritual growth (Hyman, 2019). This mindset strengthens their persistence and long-term participation in sport.

In African contexts, particularly Nigeria, religion has further acted as a tool for advocacy and empowerment. Faith leaders who encourage women's involvement in physical activity help challenge restrictive gender norms, often stressing the health, social, and leadership benefits of sport. At the University of Benin, for instance, religious associations and fellowships have supported female teams and encouraged participation in fitness activities, reinforcing sport as part of holistic development. Such initiatives demonstrate how religion can provide institutional and community backing for women athletes.

### **Summary of Reviewed Related Literature**

This chapter reviews existing studies on sport and gender with a focus on how sociocultural influences affect female students' participation in sport within university settings. It provides an overview of the historical background of female participation in sport, the role of family background, the influence of religion, and the conceptual frameworks that underpin the research. These discussions highlight the opportunities and challenges that shape women's involvement in sport, particularly within the Nigerian context.

The history of female participation in sport reflects a slow but progressive transformation. Traditionally, sport was perceived as a male-dominated activity, while women were confined to domestic roles and expected to uphold ideals of modesty and passivity. In many cultures, including African societies, athletic engagement was discouraged among women due to the belief that physical activity was incompatible with femininity. As a result, women were excluded from competitive sporting spaces for decades, limiting their opportunities for

personal development through physical activity. Over time, however, the introduction of formal education, the global women's rights movement, and the emergence of organized sporting events such as the Nigerian University Games Association (NUGA) opened new avenues for female athletes. These developments not only created spaces for women to compete but also challenged deep-rooted stereotypes. Nevertheless, women's participation in sport, particularly at the university level, continues to lag behind that of men because of persistent cultural and structural barriers.

Family background is one of the most influential determinants of female participation in sport. Parents' educational levels, occupational status, and value systems significantly shape the extent to which young women are encouraged or discouraged from engaging in physical activities. Families with higher educational attainment are generally more aware of the academic, health, and social benefits of sport. Such households often support their daughters' involvement, viewing it as complementary to their personal and professional growth. Conversely, in families with limited educational exposure, restrictive gender roles are more likely to be reinforced, thereby discouraging female participation. Beyond educational attainment, factors such as family income and parental occupation also affect participation. Wealthier households can afford sporting equipment, club memberships, and travel expenses associated with competitions, while financially constrained families may prioritize academics or household responsibilities over athletics. Moreover, parental attitudes and role modeling are critical; daughters are more likely to participate in sport when parents—particularly mothers—endorse active lifestyles (Adedeji, 2020; Hyman, 2019).

Religion also plays a dual role in influencing female participation in sport. In some cases, religious teachings and practices serve as barriers, restricting women from engaging fully in athletics due to expectations around modest dress, gender segregation, or perceptions of impropriety in public sporting spaces. For instance, female athletes in conservative

communities may be discouraged from competing in mixed-gender environments or wearing sports attire that conflicts with religious dress codes. However, religion can also function as a source of support and empowerment. Many faith-based organizations actively promote physical activity as a means of developing discipline, moral strength, and community cohesion. In Nigeria, religious groups on university campuses often sponsor intramural competitions and encourage women to participate in sports as part of holistic well-being. Studies further suggest that religious involvement can foster resilience among female athletes by providing them with strong support networks and a sense of purpose, thereby enabling them to navigate sociocultural challenges more effectively (Walseth & Fasting, 2010; Watson & Parker, 2013).

The conceptual framework guiding this research is grounded in the interaction between sociocultural influences and sport participation. At its foundation, the framework considers two main constructs: sociocultural conditions and female sport participation. Sociocultural conditions encompass cultural traditions, religious beliefs, gender expectations, family values, and institutional practices that either limit or promote athletic engagement. Sport participation refers to the active involvement of female students in recreational, intramural, or inter-university competitions. The theoretical foundation rests on two main perspectives. The first is Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987), which explains how societal expectations tied to gender roles influence women's opportunities and behaviors. Sports, particularly those perceived as physically demanding, have historically been viewed as masculine, thereby marginalizing women who participate. The second perspective is the Empowerment Through Sport framework (Lim & Dixon, 2018), which emphasizes the capacity of sport to promote self-confidence, leadership, and agency when supported by inclusive structures. Together, these perspectives explain how sociocultural constraints can restrict women's access to sport, while

enabling conditions such as supportive policies and family encouragement can transform sport into an empowering space.

In addition to theoretical models, institutional perspectives highlight the mediating role of universities. Institutional practices such as the availability of female coaches, gender-sensitive facilities, and equitable policies can either reinforce cultural restrictions or provide alternative avenues for participation. The ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1994) further emphasizes how multiple layers of influence—from immediate family and peer groups to broader societal norms—interact to shape women’s engagement in sport. Applied to the University of Benin, this framework underscores the importance of understanding how female athletes navigate a web of cultural expectations, institutional opportunities, and personal aspirations.

In summary, the literature highlights that sport participation among female university students is deeply influenced by historical, cultural, and institutional dynamics. Family background and religion emerge as particularly significant factors, either restricting or facilitating involvement depending on the values and structures at play. Conceptual models such as Social Role Theory and the Empowerment Through Sport framework provide useful lenses for analyzing these dynamics. The review also reveals that while barriers persist, changing family values, supportive religious communities, and inclusive university practices create meaningful opportunities for female empowerment through sport. These insights establish the foundation for further investigation into the sociocultural influences affecting female athletes in Nigerian universities.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter will be discussed under the following sub-headings:

- Research Design
- Population of the Study
- Sample and Sampling Techniques
- Research Instrument
- Validity and Reliability of the Instrument
- Method of Data Collection
- Method of Data Analysis

#### **Research Design**

This study will employ a survey research design, which is suitable for exploring existing situations and perceptions without altering any variables. The design was chosen to investigate the influence of sociocultural factors on female participation in sports at the University of Benin. In essence, the survey design provided a structured and dependable approach for examining and interpreting the sociocultural influences shaping female students' participation in sports within the university environment.

#### **Population of the Study**

The population for this study consists of all female students at the University of Benin who participate in sports, whether formally or informally. The population of female students that participate in sporting activities in the University of Benin is 105(Director of Sport, UNIBEN). This includes those involved in organized sporting events such as inter-faculty competitions, intramural games, and inter-university tournaments like the Nigerian University Games Association (NUGA). It also extends to female students who engage in recreational and fitness-related activities on campus. This population provides a broad base

for examining the sociocultural influences that shape women's participation in sports at different levels within the university environment.

### **Sample and Sampling Techniques**

The sample size for this study is 105 female students who participate in sport activities. The multistage sampling procedure was used for the study. The first stage involved serializing all the girls that participate in sporting activities. From each faculty, female students who actively participate in sports either as athletes in organized competitions or as recreational participants were identified. This approach minimizes bias and ensures that the sample reflects the diversity of experiences and sociocultural backgrounds within the university.

### **Research Instrument**

The research instrument that will be used for this study will be a **structured questionnaire** titled ``The Influence of Sociocultural Factors on Female Sports Participation in the University of Benin``. The Questionnaire will be designed to collect relevant data from female students engaged in sporting activities at the University of Benin. The questionnaire will be divided into **four main sections** A to D. Section A will focus on the family cultural backgrounds, section B will focus on family educational background of the respondents, Section C will focus on the religion of the respondents while section D will focus on the social economic status of respondent family. Response will be based on a **four-point Likert scale** ranging from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD). to measure respondents' attitudes and perceptions toward the Influence of Sociocultural Factors on their Participation in Sports. The instrument was scored as followed SA=4, A=3, D=2, SD=1.

### **Validity of Research Instrument**

The instrument will be validated by three experts, two from the department of human kinetics and sport science and one from the department of educational evaluation and counselling

psychology, all from the University of Benin. Their suggestions, corrections, modifications and criticism will serve the final draft of the instrument.

### **Reliability of Research Instrument**

The reliability of the research equipment will be done using split half method.

### **Method of Data Collection**

The researcher approaches the respondents and give an explanation of the questionnaire on the research topic, ensures they understand the purpose of the study and guided on how to respond accurately. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed to female students who have participated in one sport or the other. The process of data collection was carried out over a specific period, typically within two to three weeks, to allow adequate time for the completion and retrieval of the questionnaire. Respondents will be assured that their responses will be used strictly for academic purposes and that their identities would remain anonymous.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

The data collected from the respondents will be properly organized and tabulated. The responses will be subjected to both descriptive statistics such as mean, percentage, standard deviation and Chi-square. Research question one to four will be analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages. Inferential statistics particularly Chi-square test will be applied to determine the significance of the relationship between variables such as cultural beliefs, religious value, family background and sports participation among female students engaged in sports activities.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION OF RESULT AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis, interpretation, and discussion of the data generated in the course of the study. The results are arranged according to the research objectives and questions, focusing on how sociocultural factors such as family cultural background, family educational background, religion, and socioeconomic status influence sport participation among female athletes at the University of Benin. The data are summarized using tables, percentages, and statistical measures, followed by detailed explanations of each outcome.

Additionally, this chapter discusses the findings in relation to previous studies and relevant, offering a broad and informed perspective on the ways sociocultural conditions shape the involvement of female students in sporting activities within the university environment.

#### SECTION A

##### Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Demographic Variables

Variables	n	%
<b>FAMILY CULTURAL BACKGROUND</b>		
Traditional culture	21	20.0
Modern/westernized culture	49	46.7
Mixed culture	35	33.3
<b>FAMILY EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND</b>		
Ph.D	16	15.2
Masters	21	20.0
Bachelor Degree	40	38.1
Others	28	26.7

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**RELIGION**

Christianity	104	99
Islamic	1	1
African Traditional Worshippers	0	0

**SOCIAL ECONOMIC STATUS**

Business	61	58.1
Farming	3	2.9
Civil Servant	14	13.3
Others	27	25.7

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Source: Field survey, 2025 (SPSS 27)

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Demographic Variables

The demographic analysis revealed the distribution of participants across four key variables: family cultural background, family educational background, religion, and socioeconomic status. Regarding family cultural background, the majority of respondents (46.7%, n = 49) came from modern/westernized cultural backgrounds, followed by those from mixed cultural backgrounds (33.3%, n = 35), while only 20.0% (n = 21) identified with traditional culture. This suggests a predominance of westernized influence among the study participants.

In terms of family educational background, the largest proportion of respondents' families held Bachelor's degrees (38.1%, n = 40), followed by other educational qualifications (26.7%, n = 28), Master's degrees (20.0%, n = 21), and Ph.D. qualifications (15.2%, n = 16). This distribution indicates that the majority of participants came from families with tertiary education, which may influence their sports participation attitudes and opportunities.

The religious affiliation of respondents showed that Christianity was the predominant religion (99%, n = 104), followed by Islam (1%, n = 1). This religious distribution reflects the general

demographic pattern in many Nigerian communities where Christianity and Islam are the major religions.

Regarding socioeconomic status, more than half of the respondents' families were engaged in business activities (58.1%, n = 61), while 25.7% (n = 27) were involved in other occupations, 13.3% (n = 14) were civil servants, and only 2.9% (n = 3) were engaged in farming. The high percentage of business-oriented families suggests that most participants came from relatively economically active households, which may have implications for their access to sports facilities and resources.

### SECTION B: Sports Engagement and Work Engagement Dimensions

Table 2: Distribution of Responses on Sports Engagement Scale

Variables	Strongly Agree n(%)	Agree n(%)	Disagree n(%)	Strongly Disagree n(%)
I am able to train for a long period of time	22(21.0)	52(49.5)	21(20.0)	10(9.5)
I am very persistent in my sport activity	17(16.2)	38(36.2)	42(40.0)	8(7.6)
My sport activity is a self-challenge	24(22.9)	54(51.4)	21(20.0)	6(5.7)
I am enthusiastic about my sport activity	22(21.0)	55(52.4)	24(22.9)	4(3.8)
I am proud of the work I do	41(39.0)	53(50.5)	8(7.6)	3(2.9)
I feel full of energy during my training and matches	20(19.0)	53(50.5)	23(21.9)	9(8.6)
When I get up in the morning I look forward to going to train	11(10.5)	34(32.4)	49(46.7)	11(10.5)
I am strong and vigorous in my sport activity	15(14.3)	49(46.7)	36(34.3)	5(4.8)
My sport activity is full of meaning and resolve	14(13.3)	63(60.0)	22(21.0)	6(5.7)
I am carried away by my sport activity	13(12.4)	29(27.6)	54(51.4)	9(8.6)

I am happy when I am engrossed in my sport activity	19(18.1)	54(51.4)	26(24.8)	6(5.7)
I feel inspired whilst carrying out my sport activity	16(15.2)	58(55.2)	22(21.0)	9(8.6)
I am oblivious to everything going on around me when i train	11(10.5)	34(32.4)	51(48.6)	9(8.6)
I am absorbed in my sport activity	7(6.7)	52(49.5)	34(32.4)	12(11.4)
Time flies when I am training or competing	18(17.1)	43(41.0)	27(25.7)	17(16.2)

Source: Field survey, 2025 (SPSS 27)

The analysis of sports engagement dimensions revealed varying levels of agreement across multiple indicators of vigor, dedication, and absorption. Regarding vigor (energy and persistence), 70.5% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they are able to train for a long period of time (n = 74), while only 29.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed (n = 31). This indicates that the majority of participants possess the physical and mental stamina required for sustained sports participation.

For persistence in sport activity, 52.4% of respondents (n = 55) agreed or strongly agreed with being persistent, whereas 47.6% (n = 50) disagreed or strongly disagreed. This relatively balanced distribution suggests that while many athletes demonstrate persistence, a significant proportion struggle with consistency in their sports activities. The item "My sport activity is a self-challenge" received 74.3% agreement (n = 78), indicating that most respondents view their sports involvement as personally challenging and goal-oriented.

Enthusiasm toward sport activity showed high positive response, with 73.4% (n = 77) agreeing or strongly agreeing that they are enthusiastic, while only 26.7% (n = 28) disagreed. Additionally, pride in their work received the highest agreement rate, with 89.5% (n = 94) of respondents expressing pride in their sports accomplishments, compared to only 10.5% (n =

11) who disagreed. This suggests strong intrinsic motivation and self-worth derived from sports participation.

Regarding energy levels during training and matches, 69.5% (n = 73) reported feeling full of energy, while 30.5% (n = 32) disagreed. However, when asked about looking forward to training in the morning, responses were more negative, with 57.2% (n = 60) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing, compared to 42.9% (n = 45) who agreed. This discrepancy suggests that while athletes feel energized during actual training, they may experience initial reluctance or lack of morning motivation.

The dedication dimension showed that 61.0% (n = 64) agreed or strongly agreed with being strong and vigorous in their sport activity, while 39.1% (n = 41) disagreed. The meaningfulness of sport activity received substantial support, with 73.3% (n = 77) agreeing that their sport activity is full of meaning and resolve. Regarding absorption, 40.0% (n = 42) reported being carried away by their sport activity, while the majority (60.0%, n = 63) disagreed, suggesting that complete immersion in sports is not universally experienced.

Happiness when engrossed in sport activity was reported by 69.5% (n = 73) of respondents, and 70.4% (n = 74) felt inspired while carrying out their sport activity. However, being oblivious to surroundings during training showed low agreement (42.9%, n = 45) compared to disagreement (57.2%, n = 60), indicating that most athletes maintain environmental awareness during training. Absorption in sport activity received moderate agreement (56.2%, n = 59), while time perception showed that 58.1% (n = 61) agreed that time flies when training or competing.

## SECTION C: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

**Research Question One:** What is the relationship between family cultural background and sport participation among female students in the university of Benin.

**Hypothesis 1:** There will be no significant relationship between family cultural background and sport participation among female students in the University of Benin

**Table 3: Relationship between Family Cultural Background and Sport Participation**

Model Summary				
Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. Error of the estimate
1	0.112 <sup>a</sup>	0.013	0.003	0.53747

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P value	
Regression	0.380	1	0.380	1.314	0.254 <sup>b</sup>	
Residual	29.754	103	0.289			
Total	30.133					

Source: Field survey, 2025 (SPSS 27)

The regression analysis examining the relationship between family cultural background and sport participation among female students revealed a very weak positive correlation ( $R = 0.112$ ). The coefficient ( $R^2 = 0.013$ ) indicated that family cultural background accounts for only 1.3% of the variance in sport participation, suggesting an extremely limited explanatory power. The adjusted  $R^2$  value of 0.003 further confirms the negligible predictive capacity of this model.

The ANOVA results show that the regression model was not statistically significant ( $F = 1.314$ ,  $p = 0.254$ ). Since the p-value (0.254) is greater than the conventional significance level of 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. This means there is no statistically significant relationship between family cultural background and sport participation among female students at the University of Benin. Therefore, whether students come from traditional,

modern/westernized, or mixed cultural backgrounds does not significantly influence their level of sport participation.

**Research Question Two:** What is the relationship between family educational background and sport participation among female students in the university of Benin.

**Hypothesis 2:** There will be no significant relationship between family educational background and sport participation among female students in the University of Benin

**Table 4: Relationship between Family Educational Background and Sport Participation**

<b>Model Summary</b>						
<b>Model</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>R square</b>	<b>Adjusted R square</b>	<b>Std. Error of the estimate</b>		
1	0.117 <sup>a</sup>	0.014	0.004	0.53715		

<b>ANOVA<sup>a</sup></b>						
<b>Model</b>	<b>Sum of squares</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>P value</b>	
Regression	0.415	1	0.415	1.439	0.233 <sup>b</sup>	
Residual	29.718	103	0.289			
Total	30.133					

Source: Field survey, 2025 (SPSS 27)

The analysis of the relationship between family educational background and sport participation yielded similar results to the previous model. The correlation coefficient ( $R = 0.117$ ) indicates a very weak positive relationship between these variables. The  $R^2$  value of 0.014 shows that family educational background explains only 1.4% of the variation in sport participation, while the adjusted  $R^2$  of 0.004 reinforces the minimal predictive value of this relationship.

The ANOVA table demonstrates that the regression model was not statistically significant ( $F = 1.439$ ,  $p = 0.233$ ). With a p-value of 0.233, which exceeds the 0.05 significance threshold, therefore the hypothesis was accepted. This finding suggests that the educational

qualifications of students' family members (whether Ph.D., Master's, Bachelor's degree, or other qualifications) do not significantly have impact on female sport participation. The educational background of families appears to be an insignificant predictor of female students' involvement in sports activities.

**Research Question Three:** What is the relationship between religion and sport participation among female students in the university of Benin.

**Hypothesis 3:** There will be no significant relationship between religion and sport participation among female students in the University of Benin

**Table 5: Relationship between Religion and Sport Participation**

<b>Model Summary</b>				
<b>Model</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>R square</b>	<b>Adjusted R square</b>	<b>Std. Error of the estimate</b>
1	0.098 <sup>a</sup>	0.010	0.000	0.53830

<b>ANOVA<sup>a</sup></b>					
<b>Model</b>	<b>Sum of squares</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>P value</b>
Regression	0.287	1	0.287	0.991	0.322 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	29.846	103	0.290		
Total	30.133				

Source: Field survey, 2025 (SPSS 27)

The regression analysis examining religion and sport participation revealed an even weaker relationship than the previous variables. The correlation coefficient ( $R = 0.098$ ) indicates a very weak positive association. The  $R^2$  value of 0.010 suggests that religion accounts for only 1.0% of the variance in sport participation, while the adjusted  $R^2$  of 0.000 indicates virtually no predictive power when accounting for the number of predictors in the model.

The ANOVA results show that the regression model was not statistically significant ( $F = 0.991$ ,  $p = 0.322$ ). The p-value of 0.322 is well above the 0.05 significance level, leading to the failure to reject the null hypothesis. This finding indicates that religious affiliation does

not significantly influence sport participation among female students at the University of Benin. Given that 99% of respondents identified as Christians, the limited religious diversity in the sample may have contributed to the lack of significant findings, making it difficult to detect meaningful differences across religious groups.

**Research Question Four:** What is the relationship between socio-economic status and sport participation among female students in the university of Benin.

**Hypothesis 4:** There will be no significant relationship between socio-economic status and sport participation among female students in the University of Benin

**Table 6: Relationship between Socioeconomic Status and Sport Participation**

<b>Model Summary</b>					
<b>Model</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>R square</b>	<b>Adjusted R square</b>	<b>Std. Error of the estimate</b>	
1	0.004 <sup>a</sup>	0.000	-0.010	0.54088	

<b>ANOVA<sup>a</sup></b>					
<b>Model</b>	<b>Sum of squares</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>P value</b>
Regression	0.000	1	0.000	0.001	0.971 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	30.133	103	0.293		
Total	30.133				

Source: Field survey, 2025 (SPSS 27)

The analysis of socioeconomic status and sport participation produced the weakest relationship among all variables examined. The correlation coefficient ( $R = 0.004$ ) is extremely close to zero, indicating virtually no linear relationship between these variables. The  $R^2$  value of 0.000 shows that socioeconomic status explains none of the variance in sport participation, and the negative adjusted  $R^2$  (-0.010) suggests that the model performs worse than a baseline model with no predictors.

The ANOVA results confirm that the regression model was not statistically significant ( $F = 0.001$ ,  $p = 0.971$ ). With a p-value of 0.971, which is far above the 0.05 significance level, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. This finding demonstrates that socioeconomic status, as measured by family occupation (business, farming, civil service, or other), has no statistically significant relationship with sport participation among female students. Whether students come from business-oriented, farming, civil service, or other occupational backgrounds does not meaningfully predict their level of engagement in sports activities.

Collectively, the regression analyses for all four hypotheses indicate that none of the examined sociocultural factors—family cultural background, family educational background, religion, or socioeconomic status—demonstrate statistically significant relationships with sport participation among female students at the University of Benin. All four null hypotheses were retained, suggesting that these traditional sociocultural variables may not be the primary determinants of sport participation in this particular university context.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter deals with the Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation.

#### **Summary of the Study**

This study examined the influence of sociocultural factors on sport participation among female students at the University of Benin. The sociocultural variables investigated include family cultural background, family educational background, religion, and socioeconomic status. The study adopted a survey research design, using a structured questionnaire administered to all 105 female students who participate in sports within the university. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis.

Findings from the demographic section showed that a majority of respondents came from modern/westernized cultural backgrounds, families with tertiary educational qualifications, Christian households, and economically active homes. Analysis of the sports engagement scale revealed that most female athletes demonstrated enthusiasm, pride, and meaning in their sport activities, although some challenges such as low morning motivation and limited absorption during training were noted.

Inferential statistics revealed that:

- Family cultural background had no significant relationship with sport participation.
- Family educational background showed no significant relationship with sport participation.
- Religion did not significantly influence sport participation.
- Socioeconomic status did not significantly determine female sport participation.

These findings indicate that, while sociocultural factors are commonly described as major barriers in existing literature, they did not statistically predict the participation levels of female students in sports at the University of Benin. However, descriptive responses and

literature reviewed show that sociocultural factors still shape attitudes, awareness, and opportunities available to female athletes informally.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the research findings, the study concludes that sociocultural factors such as family cultural norms, parental education, religious beliefs, and socioeconomic status do not significantly determine sport participation among female students at the University of Benin. This suggests that female athletes in the university have developed strong personal interest, intrinsic motivation, and resilience that enable them to participate in sports despite possible cultural restrictions or societal expectations.

The study further concludes that the university environment—through exposure, peer group influence, and availability of sporting opportunities—may play a larger role in motivating female participation than external sociocultural factors. While these sociocultural influences exist, they do not presently constitute strong statistical barriers to participation among the studied population. This indicates a gradual shift in gender perceptions and an increasing acceptance of female involvement in sports.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

#### **1. Strengthen University-Based Support Systems**

The University of Benin should intensify efforts to provide enabling environments, such as improved sports facilities, regular competitions, and supportive policies to further enhance female participation.

#### **2. Create Awareness Programs to Sustain Cultural Shifts**

Although sociocultural factors did not significantly influence participation, awareness campaigns should be organized to continue addressing gender stereotypes, promote equal

opportunities, and sensitize students and families on the benefits of female involvement in sports.

### 3. Encourage Female Role Models and Mentors in Sports

The university should engage more female coaches and sports administrators to serve as mentors who can inspire more women to join and remain active in sports.

### 4. Enhance Family and Community Engagement

The university's sports unit should collaborate with parents and guardians by providing information on how sports contribute to students' academic performance, leadership development, and overall well-being.

### 5. Incorporate Religious and Cultural Inclusivity in Sports Programming

Sports programs should accommodate diverse cultural and religious values by providing flexible training schedules, modest sportswear options, and gender-sensitive facilities where necessary to ensure inclusiveness.

### 6. Provide Scholarships and Incentives for Female Athletes

Financial incentives, sports scholarships, and awards should be made available to outstanding female athletes to encourage greater participation and reduce economic barriers.

### 7. Further Research

Future studies should include qualitative interviews to capture deeper insights into how sociocultural influences shape the lived experiences of female athletes. Extending the study to multiple universities would also provide a broader understanding of sociocultural influences on female sport participation in Nigeria.

## **Suggestions for Further Studies**

The following topics are suggested for further studies:

1. Family Dynamics and Their Impact on the Sporting Choices of Female Students in Tertiary Institutions.

2. Cultural Perceptions of Femininity and Their Influence on Women's Engagement in Competitive Sports.
3. Religious Norms and Their Influence on Female Participation in University Sports in Nigeria.
4. Socioeconomic Inequality as a Predictor of Access to Sports Opportunities for Female Youth in Nigeria.
5. Institutional Barriers to Women's Sport Participation in Nigerian Universities: A Case Study Approach.

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**APPENDICES**  
**APPENDIX I**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN KINETICS AND SPORT SCIENCE**  
**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**  
**UNIVERSITY OF BENIN**  
**BENIN CITY, NIGERIA**

**Dear Respondent,**

**I am a final year student from the above department. The purpose of the research is to conduct an INFLUENCE OF SOCIOCULTURAL FACTORS ON SPORT PARTICIPATION AMONG FEMALE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN. Kindly answer to ensure reliable data collection for the study.**

The data collected will be used strictly for academic purposes and treated with the utmost confidentiality.

Thank you for your cooperation.

**Ayobami Makinde**

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Please tick ( ) the appropriate option

**Section A:**

**Family Cultural Background**

- Traditional culture     Modern/westernized Culture     Mixed Culture  
 Liberal\Modern

**Family Educational Background**

- Ph.D     Masters     Bachelor Degree     Others

**Religion**

- Christianity     Islamic     African Traditional Worshippers     Others

**Social Economic Status**

- Business     Farming     Civil Servant     Others

**Section B:**

S\N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1	I am able to train for a long periods of time				
2	I am very persistent in my sport activity				
3	My sport activity is a self challenge				
4	I am enthusiastic about my sport activity				
5	I am proud of the work I do				
6	I feel full of energy during my training and matches				
7	When I get up in the morning I look forward to going to train				
8	I am strong and vigorous in my sport activity				
9	My sport activity is full of meaning and resolve				
10	I am carried away by my sport activity				
11	I am happy when I am engrossed in my sport activity				
12	I feel inspired whilst carrying out my sport activity				
13	I am oblivious to everything going on around me when I train				
14	I am absorbed in my sport activity				
15	Time flies when I am training or competing				

Source: Office of the Director of Sport, UNIBEN. (2025)

Population of the Study: 105

## APPENDIX II

<b>Model Summary</b>				
<b>Model</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>R square</b>	<b>Adjusted R square</b>	<b>Std. Error of the estimate</b>
1	0.112 <sup>a</sup>	0.013	0.003	0.53747

<b>ANOVA<sup>a</sup></b>					
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1	0.117 <sup>a</sup>	0.014	0.004	0.53715

<b>ANOVA<sup>a</sup></b>					
<b>Model</b>	<b>Sum of squares</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>P value</b>
Regression	0.415	1	0.415	1.439	0.233 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	29.718	103	0.289		
Total	30.133				

Source: Field survey, 2025 (SPSS 27)

<b>Model Summary</b>				
<b>Model</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>R square</b>	<b>Adjusted R square</b>	<b>Std. Error of the estimate</b>
1	0.098 <sup>a</sup>	0.010	0.000	0.53830

<b>ANOVA<sup>a</sup></b>					
<b>Model</b>	<b>Sum of squares</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>P value</b>
Regression	0.287	1	0.287	0.991	0.322 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	29.846	103	0.290		
Total	30.133				

Source: Field survey, 2025 (SPSS 27)

<b>Model Summary</b>				
<b>Model</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>R square</b>	<b>Adjusted R square</b>	<b>Std. Error of the estimate</b>
1	0.004 <sup>a</sup>	0.000	-0.010	0.54088

<b>ANOVA<sup>a</sup></b>					
<b>Model</b>	<b>Sum of squares</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>P value</b>
Regression	0.000	1	0.000	0.001	0.971 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	30.133	103	0.293		
Total	30.133				

Source: Field survey, 2025 (SPSS 27)

## Reliability

Scale: ALL VARIABLES

### Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	20	100.0
	Excluded	0	.0
	Total	20	100.0

- a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure

### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.719	20